

NHS negligence

SIR - His Honour Richard Seymour (Letters, July 22) refers to the high cost to the NHS of medical negligence claims. For over 20 years, I prepared reports for the court in medical-negligence and personal-injury cases.

My area of expertise is nursing and, when preparing reports on the standard of care delivered to a claimant, the opinion of the expert is based on whether or not the care delivered was "of the standard expected of a reasonably competent practitioner". The number of times I was asked to report on complaints in which the same mistake had been made, over and over again, in hospitals across Britain, was shocking. Hospital managers, when interviewed in the media, always claim that lessons will be learnt, but they rarely are.

I admire and respect the nurses, midwives and doctors who deliver excellent care. However, there are far too many incidents of medical injury and negligence, demonstrated by the compensation paid out by the NHS each year - compensation that is never paid without considerable investigation into each case.

It's time to stop deifying the NHS and to have an inquiry into top-heavy, non-medical, non-nursing management and staff training, to ensure that patients get the competent care they have a right to expect.

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